

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 300137

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:SHUM, SREF, PINT, PINS, MI ZA MZ

SUBJECT: JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

REF: (A) BLANTYRE 1509 (NOTAL) (B) BLANTYRE 1510 (NOTAL)

FOR AMBASSADOR

1) FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF CURRENT LETTER DEPT. IS SENDING
TO BOTH CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC INQUIRIES RE STATUS OF
WITNESSES IN MALAWI:

QTE: THANK YOU FOR GIVING US THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON
RECENT REPORTS OF MISTREATMENT OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN
MALAWI.

QTE: WE SHARE YOUR CONCERN ABOUT THESE REPORTS AND ARE TRY-
ING TO CLARIFY THEM IN ORDER TO DETERMINE THE GOVERNMENT OF
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MALAWI'S CURRENT POLICY TOWARD WITNESSES.

QTE: AS YOU MAY KNOW, THE WITNESSES HAVE FACED DIFFICULTIES NOT ONLY IN MALAWI BUT ALSO IN MANY NEIGHBORING STATES (ZAMBIA, TANZANIA, MOZAMBIQUE AND RHODESIA) AND IN THE ARAB WORLD AS WELL. THESE DIFFICULTIES APPEAR TO ARISE CHIEFLY FROM WITNESSES' REFUSAL TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH THE

GOVERNMENTS IN THE COUNTRIES WHERE THEY RESIDE. SINCE THIS IS A HIGHLY SENSITIVE POINT TO THE LEADERS OF MANY DEVELOPING NATIONS, AND UNFORTUNATELY IS OFTEN REGARDED BY THEM - QUITE ERRONEOUSLY, OF COURSE - AS A SIGN OF DISRESPECT OR EVEN WORSE, WITNESSES HAVE AT TIMES BEEN SUBJECTED TO HARASSMENT, BANNING OR OTHER FORMS OF PRESSURE TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO CHANGE THEIR VIEWS. THERE IS CERTAINLY NO JUSTIFICATION, HOWEVER, FOR THE HARASSMENT WHICH THE WITNESSES HAVE UNDERGONE.

QTE: IN MALAWI ITSELF, WITNESSES' TROUBLES BEGAN IN 1967, WHEN THE RELIGIOUS GROUP WAS BANNED BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE GROUNDS THAT WITNESSES REFUSED TO BUY MALAWI CONGRESS PARTY CARDS AND ENCOURAGED OTHERS TO DISSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. IN 1969, THE RELATED WATCH-TOWER SOCIETY WAS ALSO BANNED FOR SIMILAR REASONS. THE FIRST LARGE-SCALE OUTFLOW OF REFUGEES TO ZAMBIA AND MOZAMBIQUE OCCURRED IN 1972-73 IN THE WAKE OF AN INTENSIFIED CAMPAIGN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI AGAINST THE WITNESSES. WHILE MANY OF THESE REFUGEES WERE REPATRIATED FROM ZAMBIA BACK TO MALAWI IN LATE 1972, LARGE NUMBERS REMAINED IN MOZAMBIQUE UNTIL THAT COUNTRY BECAME INDEPENDENT AND ITSELF BEGAN TO REPATRIATE WITNESSES TO MALAWI IN MID-1975. SOME OF THESE RETURNEES FLED AGAIN TO ZAMBIA, BUT MANY WERE TRANSPORTED BACK TO MALAWI BY ZAMBIAN OFFICIALS IN THE FALL OF 1975.

QTE: WHILE WE ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT RECENT ALLEGATIONS OF PERSECUTION IN MALAWI, IT HAS BEEN OUR CONSIDERED JUDGMENT THAT ANY REPRESENTATIONS BY THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT IMPROVE PROSPECTS FOR WITNESSES IN MALAWI. HOWEVER, WE DID MAKE KNOWN TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI THE CONCERN EXPRESSED IN THE U.S. DURING THE 1972-73
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PERIOD, AND WE HAVE RECENTLY RAISED THIS SUBJECT AGAIN WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI, BOTH IN BLANTYRE AND IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

QTE: GIVEN THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE PROBLEM, WE BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED NATIONS OR A SIMILAR INTERNATIONAL BODY IS IN A BETTER POSITION THAN THE UNITED STATES TO MAKE EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS TO

THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI, AND WE SUGGEST THAT INTERESTED PARTIES MAY WISH TO CONTACT THE UNITED NATIONS REGARDING THE PROBLEM. IN ADDITION, THEY MAY ALSO WANT TO WRITE DIRECTLY TO THE HONORABLE JACOB T. X. MUWAMBA, AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI, 2362 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008, ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE WITNESSES IN MALAWI. END QTE.

2) ABOVE LETTER DIFFERS FROM VERSION POUCHED POST ONLY IN LAST SENTENCE PENULTIMATE PARA, WHICH NOW REFLECTS FACT BOTH POST AND DEPT. HAVE RAISED SUBJECT WITH GOM.

3) AGREE WITH YOUR SUGGESTION THAT YOU SEND SAME REPLY TO ALL INQUIRIES WHICH YOU HAVE RECEIVED. THIS IS PROCEDURE WHICH DEPT. IS PRESENTLY FOLLOWING. IMPORTANT THINGS IS THAT EMBASSY AND DEPT. REPLIES DO NOT CONFLICT SINCE BOTH OF US WILL BE BASING REPLIES ON SAME INFORMATION. IF INFORMATION CHANGES, WE WILL, OF COURSE, WISH TO REVISE OUR RESPONSE.

4) DEPT. CONCURS IN YOUR USING TEXT PROPOSED REF (B), BUT SUGGESTS FOLLOWING CHANGES:

(A) RE PENULTIMATE PARA, CHANGE SECOND SENTENCE TO READ "I HAVE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE MALAWIAN MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS THE CONCERN BEING EXPRESSED IN THE UNITED STATES OVER THE STATUS OF WITNESSES IN MALAWI, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS MADE THE SAME POINT TO THE MALAWI AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON, D.C."

(B) DROP LAST SENTENCE PENULTIMATE PARA SINCE MBAYA IN LONDON DENIED ANY PROBLEM EXISTS AND MUWAMBA HERE TOOK SIMILAR LINE.

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5) IF ABOVE CHANGES ACCEPTABLE, WE WILL PROCEED TO FORWARD YOUR REPLY TO CONGRESSMAN DELANY.

6) FYI: FLOOD OF INQUIRIES WHICH DEPT. HAS BEEN RECEIVING APPEARS TO BE SLACKENING SOMEWHAT. OUR LETTER APPEARS EITHER TO SATISFY INQUIRERS OR TO PERSUADE THEM TO TURN THEIR EFFORTS ELSEWHERE, SINCE WE HAVE HAD ONLY ONE REACTION FROM RECIPIENTS. END FYI. KISSINGER

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